

**Connie J. Vetter**  
Attorney and Counsellor at Law

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## Gay Catholic community reflects on legacy of John Paul II

Leaders look forward to more open, inclusive church

by Richard Lindsay

With the passing of Pope John Paul II, the world must begin to account for the legacy of an important and influential figure of the 20th Century. John Paul II brought a new day of hope for many, by his advocacy for the poor and for developing nations, for peace and for human rights. His pontificate, however, frequently left lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Catholics bereft of hope, and still waiting for the bright day of their full inclusion in the Church. The following are quotes from three leading American Catholic voices for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality on the legacy of John Paul II and their hopes for the future of the Roman Catholic Church.

"The death of the Pope provides a golden opportunity for the Catholic Church to rejoice in his geopolitical accomplishments and take up where he left off in the achievement of justice among Catholics. Women expect the same freedom of choice Pope John Paul II urged for Cubans. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people deserve the same respect and freedom he championed for those who lived under Communism. Let that be his legacy."

— Mary E. Hunt, PhD.  
Co-director  
WATER

Women's Alliance for Theology,  
Ethics and Ritual

"Pope John Paul II was a leader of deep piety and strong convictions. His moral leadership was heeded not only by Catholics, but by politicians, philosophers, and religious leaders throughout the world.

"He was a man whose ideas were deeply formed by coming of age in his native Poland, occupied first by the Nazis, and then by the Communists. These experiences of oppression inspired his deep concern for social justice. He will be remembered for his strong voice on human rights and dignity.

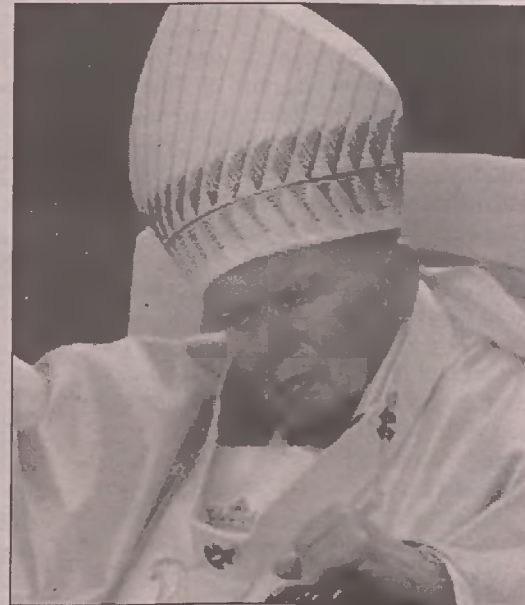
"Unfortunately, his record on gay/lesbian issues is not as admirable. His 26-year pontificate was marked by an end to dialogue on many theological issues, including homosexuality. He closed the windows of renewal that were opened by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council...

"We pray for the repose of his soul, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will provide our Church with a leader who shares Pope John Paul II's strong voice and moral courage, but who will provide us with a Church that is more open to dialogue, reconciliation, and gay/lesbian equality. Lesbian/gay Catholics and their families need a leader who offers a healing hand after John Paul's pontificate which often caused them so much pain."

— Francis DeBernardo  
Executive Director  
New Ways Ministry

"While we join millions around the world in earnest prayer for the Pope's eternal salvation

and the future of our Church, we remember that this papacy has used harsh and derogatory language such as 'objectively disordered and intrinsically evil' to describe gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people.



Polls show that Americans want a new pope who is less conservative than John Paul II.

"This Pope led the Church in teaching damaging misrepresentations about the health and holiness of our loving relationships — calling them part of an 'ideology of evil' — and about the raising of our children while covering up the real abuse of children and related abuse of power by some of John Paul II's brother bishops and priests. He also misused his authority to stop fellow cardinals and bishops from speaking for the obvious moral good of using condoms in the prevention of the spread of HIV.

"We are saddened that John Paul II has left this life without having used his personal faith, intellect and authority to learn how God is speaking through GLBT people to spread the Gospel.

"The Church's teachings on sexuality and personal responsibility are arrested in a juvenile stage. They show neither respect for the moral development of individuals nor for God's work in each of us in the development of our consciences and spiritual lives.... In this regard, we believe (Vatican leaders) must fully inform their consciences as moral law requires by seeking to understand the spiritual lives of GLBT Catholics, by considering the ongoing works of theologians and social science researchers knowledgeable about GLBT issues and relationships, and by exploring the genuine Gospel call of Jesus Christ to love and inclusion."

— Sam Sinnett  
President  
Dignity USA

Dr. Mary E. Hunt, Sam Sinnett, and Francis DeBernardo are members of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Religious Leadership Roundtable.

### info:

www.dignityusa.org  
www.dignityusa.org  
www.his.com/~mhunt